An Overview of Leisure Counselling

Manitoba
Culture, Heritage
and Recreation

Recreation Branch

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FOREWORD

Since the late fifties, people have become more concerned about the quality of life in society. The human services fields have evolved from this concern. Social services agencies and departments have grown and developed. They focus on the basic needs of people: health care, food, housing, employment and safety, etc. These needs must be met first to sustain the secure existence of people in society but in order to meet all the needs of people we cannot focus only on their basic needs. We must consider their happiness and pleasure as well! What people do in their leisure time is very important to their total development and existence.

This booklet gives an overview philosophy of leisure development to enable volunteers and professionals in the social and community services fields to understand this concept of leisure. It explains the process of leisure counseling in a step-by-step approach that is easy to follow and implement in any setting. A comprehensive list of a variety of resources related to leisure counseling is also included.

Leisure Counseling processes have primarily been used in a rehabilitative setting for senior groups, disabled persons, delinquents, etc. Although some references to these particular groups have been made, this should not be interpreted as meaning that only these groups can benefit from Leisure Counseling. The ideas and methods outlined in this booklet can be applied to addressing the leisure concerns of any individual or group.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Laurie Beachell

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Changing Concept of Leisure

The concept of leisure and recreation has changed significantly throughout the decades. The evolution of recreation and leisure has paralleled the evolution of civilization. The understanding of recreation and leisure today has its roots in the historical development of recreation.

Since the beginning of time, recreation has been an integral part of people's lives. Early civilizations made little distinction between work and play. Activities such as fishing, hunting and gathering food occurred whenever possible, and the availability of the resource determined whether it was considered work or play. These early activities were fairly unstructured, and occurred on a random basis. Later cultures formed more formal recreation activities such as festivals, religious events and promenades in open gardens. In this era, the Leisure Ethic developed by the Greeks, dominated recreation pursuits. This Ethic stated recreational activities or the "intelligent use of free time" was the main purpose in life. During this era, participation in leisure activities became stratified according to class.

Subsequent traditional societies were strongly influenced by the Protestant Work Ethic. In contrast to the Leisure Ethic, the Work Ethic held that the pursuit of work was necessary to ensure eternal peace. As society changed, so did the concept of leisure. When rural dwellers began to migrate to the cities, people's lifestyles and attitudes changed.

As the nuclear family replaced the traditional extended family household, family recreation dwindled and the individual pursuit of leisure activities became apparent. At this time, an attitude change became apparent and modern thought became characterized by self fulfillment and personal development.

The development of rapid travel made domestic and international travel accessible to a greater percentage of the population. This resulted in, among other things, the global sharing of recreation opportunities. The advent of large bureaucracies, white collar workers and regimented work hours (9 - 5) meant that people in general had more disposable income and less disposable time. People at this point in time had the desire and the means to engage in leisure opportunities, however they now wanted direction to choose the appropriate activity.

Here, recreation was used as a means to attain self fulfillment and leisure counseling was a tool people could use to attain this goal. The more recent economic situation produced yet another significant change. Due to current developments such as high unemployment, shorter work weeks, job sharing etc., people in general now have less disposable income and more disposable

time. Thus, leisure counseling has become a valuable service in assisting people to address how they use their time. Traditionally, this type of service has been utilized in some instances by special populations (disabled, youth, seniors). Leisure counseling has aided in providing an additional dimension (recreation) to their lives, that these people could not have otherwise pursued.

For many socially disadvantaged populations, recreation has some therapeutic value. It has been used as a tool to integrate disadvantaged people back into the community life. If the value of recreation and leisure counseling has been recognized for the socially disadvantaged, why has the rest of society not utilized this resource to its fullest. Only recently has the value of leisure counseling been recognized and used to a fuller extent.

Leisure Counseling Defined

The recreation field in general is a human-social service and as such is open to a great deal of interpretation. For this reason, several definitions of leisure counseling will be offered. Gunn and Peterson define Leisure Counseling as,

> "a process utilizing verbal facilitative techniques to promote self-awareness, awareness of leisure attitudes, values and feelings and the development of decision-making and problem solving skills relating to leisure participation (Gunn, Peterson, 1978)

Edward's definition of leisure counseling is,

> "a process of helping individuals of any age, alone or in groups, to select the most satisfying and practical leisure activities for their present lives, and then helping them to find the time and place to enjoy these activities."
> (Edwards, 1977)

The process of aiding people prepare for leisure opportunities is not isolated to leisure counseling itself. Another process which has similar goals is Leisure Education. Several definitions are also offered for this term.

> Gunn and Peterson (1977), Mundy and Odum (1979), and Witt and Comptom (1980) refer to leisure education "as a

comprehensive program employed to enhance the quality of a person's life through leisure". (Chinn and Joswick, 1981)

Leisure education is also defined as "the development of an appreciation, interests and/or skills, which provides the individual with a variety of opportunities during his leisure. (Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Recreation Development Division, 1978)

The distinction between leisure education and leisure counseling is that the former's primary focus is learning centered with the goal of enhancing the leisure lifestyle of the individual, whereas leisure counseling's major focus is problem centered using problem solving techiques among others to reach the goal of enhancing one's leisure lifestyle.

Need for Leisure Counseling

Values and beliefs within our society are continually changing. People are questioning the Work Ethic and are increasingly looking for other opportunities to find self fulfillment, creative outlets and activities from which they will broaden their experience and learning. People are looking at constructive use of leisure time as a means to fill these basic human needs. As society continues to promote the concept of greater self fulfillment in many instances people are looking at their lifestyles and recognizing that their needs are not being met. Yet we have failed to develop methods for those individuals to explore ways of meeting these needs. People realize there is "more" out there but are unaware as to how to attain this sense of "more". Leisure Counseling is a process that can assist individuals to realize these unmet needs.

The need for Leisure Counseling is also becoming evident as more people have more free time. With shorter work weeks, early retirement, and high unemployment, greater numbers of individuals have a greater opportunity for leisure participation. This increased time however, does not mean increased discretionary dollars. This in itself, is causing difficulty for many individuals and leisure counseling is required to assist these individuals overcome a variety of constraints.

Today's recreation opportunities are endless. Time and money considerations are two main criteria considered when people make their

recreation choices. Reasons for participating in these opportunities vary from person to person. The Leisure Counselor is the most qualified to match the participant's needs with the appropriate program. Leisure counseling is practised in three service areas; rehabilitative agencies, private and commercial leisure counseling agencies, and public based recreation services. In the latter two areas, leisure counseling has traditionally been used to a minimum.

According to Compton, Witt, Sanchey, the greatest support for leisure counseling is within the rehabilitative sector and its weakest in the public sector. The reason why this occurs lies in the problem centered orientation of Leisure Counseling. Many individuals in special population groups are not accustomed to dealing with independent leisure time. These people often require the aid of Leisure Counselors (O'Morrow, 1970).

Future trends in Leisure Counseling may focus on the use of computerized information systems to aid in identifying both leisure opportunities in the community as well as assessing the leisure potential of the participant.

The Leisure Counselor

The leisure counselor is not able to solve all problems. They have a certain area of expertise and within that realm they are able to address a multitude of problems and issues experienced by individuals. The role of the counselor must be clearly defined in each leisure program so that both counselor and client know what to expect. There are ethical guidelines and mandates that dictate the counselors conduct of behavior. Leisure counselors who practise without a social mandate and/or ethical guidelines do so by their own authority. Likewise, people who place themselves in the counseling role without support from any profession are doing so by their own authority (Kelly, 1980). This makes the leisure counseling field especially vulnerable to judgement by other professionals.

The leisure counselor must possess a number of skills in order to be effective. The counselor must keep an open and objective mind. It is imperative that the counselor have a realistic concept of the philosophy of leisure, as well as the practical happenings in the field. This individual must be able to assimilate the information given by the client with the resources in the community in order to develop a leisure program for the individual.

Depending upon the type of leisure counseling required in a particular case, the counselor may assume the following role:

Leisure Educator — to make the individual client aware of the value and benefits of leisure participation and of the variety of opportunities and leisure resources available to him or her.

Leisure Motivator — to stimulate and motivate the clients to review his/her present lifestyle and encourage the individual to become involved in activities that fulfill certain needs.

Leisure Liaison — to provide a liaison between the individual and the community leisure resources.

Leisure Advocate — to advocate for better community support services for individuals having difficulty accessing these services. This may include assisting in establishing the supports such as a volunteer that would enable the individual to participate more fully.

It is essential in any leisure counseling process that the counselor clearly define his/her role in relation to assisting the client. Often individuals receiving counseling have misinterpreted the counselor's role and have expectations above that of the counselor. Therefore it is essential in any counseling situation that the role of the counselor be clearly understood by all parties.

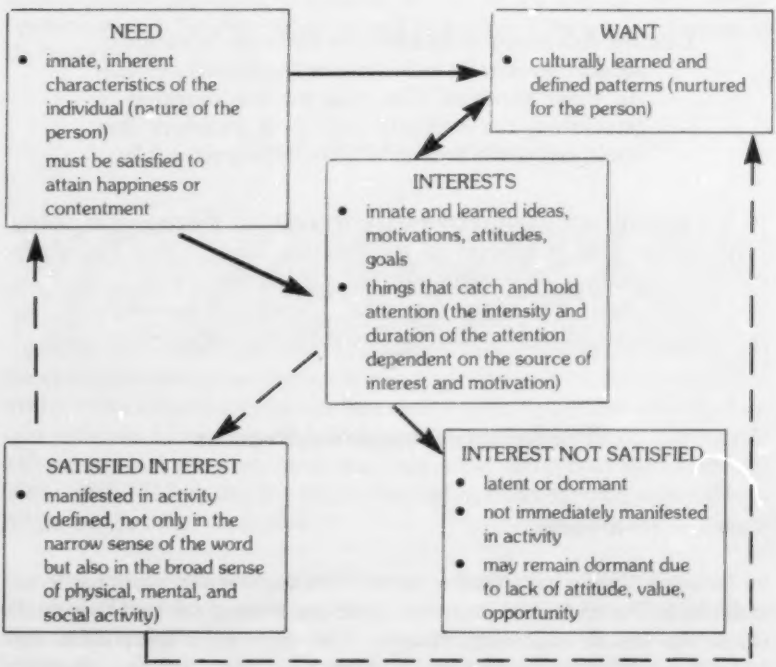
The Leisure Counseling Process

Stage 1 — Awareness

Before any leisure counseling takes place, some groundwork has to be established. The client and counselor must understand the part they each play in the leisure counseling process. The client must understand the capabilities and limitations of the counselor. Also, the client must learn to trust the counselor and be completely honest about their needs and interests. In turn, the counselor must be sensitive to the client.

It is important that the counselor understand a client's perspective on life such as feelings about self and others, personal experiences, priorities in life, attitudes and beliefs. These factors, among others, contribute to a client's personality and thus his/her needs. As life experiences vary, so too does each client's needs. A counselor must also understand his perspective on life, and be careful not to impose it on others. In order to understand how another person thinks or feels, one does not have to agree or disagree with it. It simply means that you are able to understand and respect the other's point of view. For example, a single parent may have different needs and priorities as a married parent, who has another spouse available to share in the responsibilities of child bearing. Whether or not the leisure counselor agrees with the client's philosophy on life, they must be able to offer the appropriate options.

Another aspect in the Awareness Stage is a clarifying process. The counselor must clarify certain terminology before going on to the next stage. Some of the terminology includes;


NEED
• innate, inherent characteristics of the individual (nature of the person)
must be satisfied to attain happiness or contentment
WANT
• culturally learned and defined patterns (nurtured for the person)
INTERESTS
• innate and learned ideas, motivations, attitudes, goals
• things that catch and hold attention (the intensity and duration of the attention dependent on the source of interest and motivation)
SATISFIED INTEREST
• manifested in activity (defined, not only in the narrow sense of the word but also in the broad sense of physical, mental, and social activity)
INTEREST NOT SATISFIED
• latent or dormant
• not immediately manifested in activity
• may remain dormant due to lack of attitude, value, opportunity

NOTE: ------- = Satisfaction potential not clear.

Figure 8-8. Relationship of needs, wants, and interests. (From Peter Witt and Rhonda Groom: "Damages and problems associated with current approaches to developing Leisure Interest Finders," *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1979, p. 23.)

Stage 2 — Needs Assessment

One of the most crucial steps in leisure counseling is the development of a leisure profile on each client. This profile must include a variety of information such as

1) needs
2) interests
3) past and future lifestyles
4) present lifestyle

1) **Needs**

Each person has a variety of needs that must be fulfilled, in order to achieve a well balanced lifestyle. These needs include;

Social needs	— the need to be with others
	— acceptance by others
Physical	— the need for movement
	— exercise, to be fit
Emotional	— the need for gratification
	— need for self-esteem
	— need to be alone — contemplate

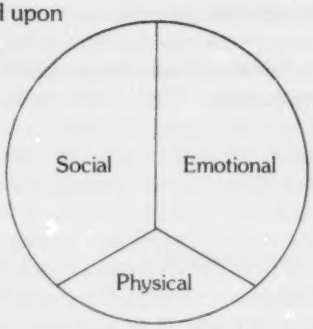
The leisure counselor and client must decide, what portion of time has to be spent fulfilling these needs. One method of determining this would be

a) client-counselor discussion on the meaning of these terms.
b) client fills out questionnaire, "The Pie of Life".

The "Pie of Life" exercise will assist individuals in determining how they presently spend their time and how they would like to use their time. The client is asked to draw a circle and divide according to time spent on meeting social, emotional or physical need. The circle can also be looked upon as a 24 hour day and the individual be directed to divide that day in segments related to how they spend their time or would like to spend their time.

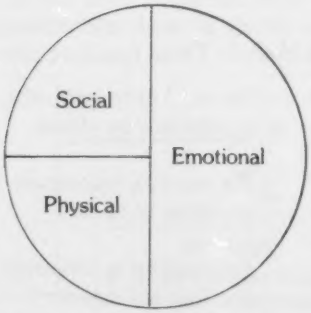
The following is based upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Example 1



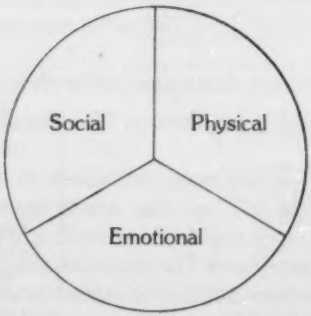
This person may desire a greater balance of physical exercise.

Example 2



This person may desire to dwell less on self emotions and more on social and physical activity.

Example 3



This person has an equal balance of needs being met, but wishes to increase social activities. Here the leisure counselor has to be careful not to impose his/her personal values on this person's decision. If this person needs or wants more social activity, the counselor can only point out the effects of this choice of action.

2) **Interests**

Each person has a variety of interests. Some are known to the individual and others are not. Epenck writes that there are four different levels of interest. They include:

Expressed Interest — which is a verbal expression of interest in an activity.

Manifest Interest — interest that develops while in an activity.

Tested Interest — interest measured by objective tests.

Inventional Interest — interest assessed by means of lists of activities similar to those in expressed interest except that each response is given an experimentally determined weight. This score represents a pattern of interests (Edginton, 1980).

A leisure counselor may want to determine more than one type of interest level. Depending on the type of interest examined, the following methods may be used:

- exposure to a variety of recreation opportunities, pamphlet, audio-visual
- participation in a variety of recreation opportunities
- check-list approach — survey of interests.

Given to Client at Initial Meeting

1) Make a listing of all leisure interests.
2) Participate in at least three activity areas that you have never experienced before.
3) Attend at least three recreation workshops, programs, etc., that discussed recreation areas you are unfamiliar with.
4) Read about at least three leisure organizations that you have never heard of before and see what recreation opportunities they provide.
5) Compile a leisure interest list after completing these steps.

This may give the client a better understanding of Manifest interests.

3) Past and Future Lifestyles

Probably the most well-developed and scientifically documented instrument available is the Leisure Activities Blank (LAB) developed by George McKechnie. The instrument is used to determine an individual's past and future leisure behaviour in seven activity categories. Correlated with demographic variables such as age, sex and income, the instrument provides a simple 15 to 20 minute test that is self-administering. Walshe in a review of the LAB indicates:

The LAB is based on 120 recreation activities judged to have high participation rates in the United States. The respondent indicates the extent of past involvement in each activity and the extent of expected future participation, thus tapping actual behavior and intentionality. The client places the number corresponding to the extent of past participation beside each activity on side one of the answer sheet as follows: "never engaged in the activity," "tried it once or a few times," "did it regularly but no longer," and "currently engaged in it regularly." Indicating his/her future activity intentions in the same manner on side two, the client decides if he or she "expects to do it in the future," "is uncertain or doesn't know," or "expects to do it sometime in the future."

Scales for past and future responses are developed according to factor analysis. Two validity scales — frequent past and frequent future — determine if the respondent is answering the LAB in a purposeful and accurate manner. The test is scored using superimposed scoring templates.*

**Willoughby A. Walshe, "Leisure Counseling Instrumentation". In Compton and Goldstein, pp. 110 and 111.*

4) Present Lifestyle

One approach is a Time Analysis. This is a systematic approach to determine how the client spends his/her time, and a discussion of how he/she would like to spend their time. This may be done by asking the client to list a normal day's activities. Next, the client could be exposed to a variety of opportunities and then asked to revise her listing of a normal day's activity. The main problem here may be that the person does not know how to utilize his/her time effectively.

The effective leisure counselor will be able to extract certain information from the client and develop a program to meet his/her needs. There are a variety of methods one may choose to do this.

Assessment Techniques

- Interviews — counseling — individual or group
- Audio-visual presentations
- Leisure awareness activities

Assessment Instruments

- Surveys
- Rating lists
- Check lists

There are several approaches to leisure counseling that one may choose. McDowell offers four distinct orientations which include;

1) Leisure-related Behavioral Problems, in which the primary counseling focus is on therapeutic facilitation.
2) Leisure Lifestyle Awareness, in which the primary focus is education and preventive.
3) Leisure Resource Guidance, in which the primary counseling focus is on leisure activity exploration.
4) Leisure Skills Development, in which the primary counseling focus is on developing integrative, normalizing leisure-related skills. (Edginton, 1980 p. 239)

Stage 3 — Goal Determination

At this stage, specific problem areas may be identified from the Needs Assessment and client's specific needs are stated. The counselor must take precaution in making sure that these identified needs are truly the clients, and not the counselor's. The counselor may have a problem list and a stated needs list. Example:

John Doe — Problem List	John Doe — Stated Needs List
1. Transportation	1. More social contact.
2. Overweight.	2. More physical exercise opportunities.

Stage 4 — Program Planning

Program planning involves establishing objectives with the client. This process may also be termed an action plan. The program will be developed from information received in Stages 2 and 3. It is imperative that once the program is developed, the client gives total support and commitment. In many cases, a formalized contract between client and counselor has been found to be useful. For example, John Doe will go to the local Recreation Department and register for a pottery course. The Program Plan must be written down and followed step by step. For example, see next page. ►

Stage 5 — Implementation

The strategy of the counselor may vary from client to client. Some models include group meetings, individual meetings and exercise discussions. In order for the program to be successfully implemented, barriers to participation must be dealt with. When the client and counselor are at this stage, they must review the program plan and determine barriers to participation.

Some common barriers include:

- attitude barriers
- communication barriers
- time barriers
- transportation barriers
- economic barriers
- health barriers
- socio-cultural barriers
- architectural barriers for persons with a physical disability

Overcoming barriers by developing a systematic plan of action is essential to the implementation process. Once specific barriers have been identified, a plan of action must be developed to address each individual barrier. The examples on page 18 illustrate possible solutions in overcoming some common barriers.

LEISURE PROGRAM PLAN

NAME: John Doe DATE: January 30/84

ADDRESS: 102 Nowheresville Avenue

HOME PHONE: 111-1111 BUSINESS PHONE: 222-2222

LEISURE GOALS:

1) Increase overall fitness level.
2) Improve social skills.
3) Develop existing skills.
4) Develop new skills.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES SELECTED:

1) Enroll in pottery course.
2) Enroll in social dancing.
3) Walk to work two days per week.
4) 20 minutes of jogging, 3 times per week.

GETTING STARTED:

STEP	WHEN
1) Find out registration information on course, and enroll at appropriate time	BY February 1
2) Buy a good pair of jogging runners	BY February 1
3) Find a comfortable pair of shoes to walk to work in	BY February 2
4)	BY

Examples:

Economic Barriers

- The client may require assistance in establishing a personal budget in order to save needed funds for a desired activity.
- A time payment system may be arranged with the course provider in order to facilitate a payment of fees over a period of time instead of a lump sum.
- Bartering or exchange of services may be considered in lieu of payment. A student may volunteer "x" number of hours to the course provider in assisting with other programs in exchange for reduced or waived registration fees.

Transportation Barriers

- Connections can be made with other individuals in the program who may be willing to provide transportation on a volunteer basis for a client.
- The program may also be offered in a more convenient location.
- A friend may be interested in the same program and be able to provide transportation.

Time Barriers

- The client may be asked to priorize their activities and time spent in each.
- A time analysis system may be developed to determine whether time constraints are real or imagined.

Socio-Cultural Barriers

- A client may lack the confidence, language or social skills to enter a new situation alone. Volunteer or support of friends participating in the same activity may eventually overcome these barriers.

Architectural Barriers

- The course provider may be able to change the location of the activity if made aware of the problem.
- Public facilities could be encouraged to make the facility accessible.

Barriers may be real or imagined. What is essential is that they be recognized and plans of action be developed for overcoming these barriers.

Stage 6 — Evaluation

The evaluation process is one of the most crucial, for it determines whether goals have been met. The evaluation must be "built into the program" and allow for any improvements that may have to be made. Evaluation should take place at two intervals during this process, during implementation and upon completion. At these times goals are measured.

When it is discovered that the client no longer requires counseling, the counseling process does not end. Follow-up is a necessary step to ensure that a client is content with their new leisure lifestyle, or that they are capable of continuing the process on their own. It is possible that a client may go through the program outlined and then may become blocked by some unexpected barrier. The client may also lack the motivation or skills to pursue the outlined course of action. The follow-up may be done by interview, phone call, survey or letter to find out if needs are being met.

The entire leisure counseling process should be evaluated, to see where improvements can be made. When possible, evaluation information should be used to improve future programs. Evaluations are a waste of time, money and human resource if not used after they are completed.

Benefits of Leisure Counseling

The Leisure Counseling process may be of great value to both individuals and groups when developed and implemented properly. However, when employing this process with groups, one must be cautious to ensure that goals, needs and program plans are specific to the individual.

Some of the many benefits include:

- increased self-awareness in leisure
- increased leisure awareness
- increased awareness of leisure/play/feelings/ attitudes/values
- increased leisure decision making skills
- increased leisure problem solving skills
- increased personal satisfaction regarding socio-leisure lifestyle

(Edginton)

Note:

The Leisure Counseling process may be of great value to socially disadvantaged groups as well as the rest of society. The leisure counselor has certain skills and qualifications that make them somewhat of an authority in their field. However, outside of the recreation field such as psychology, medicine, social work, leisure counselors have little reliable authority.

Leisure Counselors can only be expected to counsel within the realm of recreation, but they are often asked to go beyond this realm. It is essential that both client and counselor have clearly defined the parameters and responsibilities of each participant in the counseling process.

Selected Resources

The following materials are available from the Resource Centre operated by the Recreation Branch of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Province of Manitoba.

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Films

"Is it Leisure or Leisure". An overview of Leisure philosophy. 30 minutes.

"Leisure". An overview of Leisure philosophy. 14 minutes.